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Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General arrives in Haiti at start of four-day visit to Caribbean and Central America; will preside over transfer of command from Multinational Force to UNMIH tomorrow.

+ United Nations should proceed with preparations for deployment of infantry units in Angola, Secretary-General tells Security Council.

+ Security Council decides to maintain sanctions regime against Libya; France, United Kingdom and United States stress commitment to comprehensive enforcement.

+ Secretary-General says United Nations did not achieve all goals in Somalia, but can claim some major accomplishments; Organization to maintain political presence in area to provide good offices.

+ Commission on Status of Women approves texts on rape of women in former Yugoslavia, status of women in Secretariat, and rights of migrant workers.

+ Administrative and Budgetary Committee approves financing of Haiti, Tajikistan and Iraq-Kuwait peace-keeping missions.

+ Spain institutes proceedings against Canada in International Court of Justice in connection with current fishing dispute.

+ Human Rights Committee considers initial report of United States on implementation of Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

+ FAO and Haiti sign agreement on technical and legal assistance for agrarian reform.

+ Economic Commission for Europe to hold fiftieth annual session in Geneva from 3 to 11 April.

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For information media—not an official record

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali arrived in Port-au-Prince today, beginning a four-day visit to the Caribbean and Central America. Tomorrow, together with the Presidents of Haiti and the United States, he will preside over ceremonies marking the transfer of command from the Multinational Force to the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH).

Meanwhile, Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi expressed shock and indignation at the assassination of Mireille Durochar-Bertin, a Haitian lawyer, and of a person accompanying her. He said that the odious crime must not remain unpunished, and that the Haitian authorities could count on the full cooperation of UNMIH.

"Those who want to perpetuate the reign of violence and prevent Haiti from moving forward on the path to democracy and progress are condemned in advance", Mr. Brahimi said. He expressed confidence that the Haitian people would not react to provocations, and pledged that the international community would support them fully in their work to transform Haiti.

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It would be in the best interest of the Angolan peace process to proceed with preparations for the deployment of infantry units of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III), according to the Secretary-General. In a letter to the President of the Security Council dated 28 March, he said the conditions stipulated in Council resolution 976 (1995) had not been fully met. However, some progress had recently been made in the effective cessation of hostilities, the disengagement of troops, the establishment of verification mechanisms, the modalities for integration of military forces, and other essential tasks.

It was becoming increasingly necessary to assist the Angolan parties in overcoming their mutual distrust and to give the peace process additional impetus, the Secretary-General continued. It was also important to avoid dangerous delays in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol which might destabilize the situation on the ground. Preparations for the deployment of United Nations troops were already behind the original schedule. If the parties did not comply without delay with their commitments under the Protocol and provide indispensable logistic support to UNAVEM III, it would not be possible to ensure that the deployment began in May.

The Secretary-General stressed that time was short and that the opportunities created by the Lusaka Protocol and resolution 976 (1995) must not be lost. United Nations efforts must be matched by an unambiguous political will and concrete action by the Angolan parties. In the meantime, the Organization would continue with all necessary logistical preparation for UNAVEM III.

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The President of the Security Council, Li Zhaoxing (China), today said that no agreement had been reached on the issue of sanctions against Libya.

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He made that comment to correspondents after the Council's ninth review of the sanctions regime imposed by resolution 748 (1992).

Meanwhile, France, the United Kingdom and the United States said they were committed to full and comprehensive enforcement of the sanctions against Libya. In a statement issued at Headquarters, they reaffirmed their common determination to bring to justice those responsible for the bombings of Pan Am flight 103 and UTA flight 772. They also reaffirmed that Libya must ensure the appearance of the two Lockerbie suspects in the United Kingdom or United States, where they would receive a fair trial.

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While the United Nations did not achieve all its objectives in Somalia, it could claim some major accomplishments, including the ending of starvation in the country, the Secretary-General said in a report dated 28 March. The Organization also afforded the Somali parties every opportunity for national reconciliation and reconstruction. If the political will to achieve a durable compromise was lacking, the responsibility lay with the Somali leadership.

The United Nations experience in Somalia confirmed that the responsibility for political compromise and national reconciliation must be borne by the leaders and people concerned, the Secretary-General continued. "The international community can only facilitate, prod, encourage and assist. It can neither impose peace nor coerce unwilling parties into accepting it", he said.

The Secretary-General stressed that the United Nations was not abandoning Somalia. There was a vital link between humanitarian assistance and assistance in achieving national reconciliation. With that in mind, he would continue to make his good offices available to the Somali parties and would maintain a political presence in the area for that purpose. The size and mandate of that presence would depend on whether the Somali factions wanted the Organization to play a facilitating or mediating role and were ready to cooperate with it. Meanwhile the Special Representative for Somalia would remain in Nairobi, pending further instructions, to monitor the situation and coordinate United Nations humanitarian activities in Somalia.

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The Commission on the Status of Women has adopted a resolution condemning the continuing abhorrent practice of rape and abuse of women and children in the areas of armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia. It took that action yesterday, following a roll-call vote on one preambular paragraph.

Acting on the request of the Russian Federation, the Commission voted 35 in favour to 1 against, with 5 abstentions, to retain preambular paragraph 8. In that paragraph, the Commission expressed its conviction that the heinous practice of rape and abuse of women constituted a deliberate weapon of war in fulfilling the policy of "ethnic cleansing" carried out by Serb forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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The Commission also approved a resolution by which the Economic and Social Council would urge the Secretary-General to implement fully the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000). The Council would also urge him to accord greater priority to recruiting and promoting women in posts, subject to geographical distribution. The Secretary-General would also be requested to further develop policy measures aimed at preventing sexual harassment in the Secretariat.

By another text adopted yesterday, the Commission encouraged Member States to ensure the protection of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women migrant workers. States were urged to implement measures to eradicate all forms of racism and xenophobia, and to promote education on human rights and acceptance of cultural diversity.

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The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) has approved a draft resolution by which the General Assembly would appropriate almost $152 million to maintain the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) from 1 February to 31 July 1995. By that text, the Assembly would appropriate $6 million for the period 1 August 1994 to 31 January 1995 and $44,000 for the period 1 to 31ÑJulyÑ1994.

The Committee also approved a draft resolution on the financing of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT). By that text, the Assembly would appropriate $10 million for the period 27 April 1995 to 30 June 1996, subject to the decision of the Security Council to extend the Mission's mandate. It would also appropriate over $3 million for the period 16 December 1994 to 26 April 1995.

Also yesterday, the Committee recommended that the Assembly provisionally approve $12 million to maintain the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) from 1 April to 30 June, should the Security Council extend it.

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Spain has instituted proceedings against Canada in the International Court of Justice in connection with the fishing dispute between the two countries. The dispute relates to the amended Canadian Coastal Fisheries Protection Act, as well as to certain measures taken on the basis of that legislation, particularly the boarding of a Spanish fishing boat on the high seas on 9 March.

Spain's application to the Court alleges the violation of various principles and norms of international law. It states that there is a dispute between Spain and Canada which, going beyond the framework of fishing, seriously affects the very principle of the freedom of the high seas, and

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implies a serious infringement of Spain's sovereign rights.

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The Human Rights Committee yesterday considered the initial report of the United States on implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Introducing the report, John Shattuck, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, said the United States was "a work in progress". It did not shrink from such problems as crime, drugs, poverty and discrimination. He added that his country's ratification of the Covenant in 1992 was the beginning, not the end, of a process of constructive dialogue with the Committee.

Expert members of the Committee expressed concern about the application of the death penalty in the United States to minors of sixteen years of age and above. They also posed questions relating to such matters as the status and treatment of Native Americans, laws on the detention of "excludable aliens" pending their deportation, and minimum standards for the humane treatment of prisoners.

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The President of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Jacques Diouf, have signed an agreement on assistance for agrarian reform. The FAO confirmed its readiness to supply technical and legal assistance to Haiti, while the Haitian Government underscored its commitment to the full revision of land-tenure systems.

Under its technical cooperation programme, the FAO will assist with the preparation of land-tenure legislation and with the establishment of institutions to implement it. It will also help to establish a land survey and registration system, and will assist in the search for international financing for the planned activities.

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The 55-member Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) will hold its fiftieth annual session in Geneva from 3 to 11 April. Among the issues to be discussed are assistance to European countries with economies in transition and their integration into the European and global economy. A high-level round table will discuss the subject "Promoting the expansion of trade of the countries in transition as an important function of the integration with the European and global economy".

Created in 1947, the ECE was the first of five regional commissions of the United Nations. Within its interdisciplinary work programme, emphasis is laid on the environment, transport, statistics, trade facilitation and economic analysis. Sustainable development is the guiding principle of all ECE activities.

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